

A / Sub
D /

--8. In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating to said subscriber equipment information streams including content requested by said subscriber equipment, apparatus comprising:

a session manager, for interacting with said subscriber equipment and maintaining a playlist, said playlist defining at least one content stream to be provided to said subscriber;

a server, for storing content streams; and

a server controller, for retrieving from said server content streams defined by said playlist, said content streams being sequentially provided to said subscriber;

said session manager modifying said playlist in response to playlist modification commands received from said subscriber equipment.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:

said modification commands comprise at least one of an add command, a delete command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a fast forward command and a rewind command.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said add command and said delete command, respectively adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said playlist.

11. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said skip forward command and said skip backwards command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber

AI
CONT
equipment, respectively, a next content stream or a previous content stream within said playlist.

12. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein each content stream defined by said playlist has associated with it a fast forward stream and a fast rewind stream, and wherein:

said session manager, in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content stream

13. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:

said server controller, in response to a remaining portion of a provided content stream being below a threshold level, communicating a termination notification to said session manager.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said termination notification, communicating to said server controller a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment.

15. The method of claim 8, wherein said server comprises a plurality of servers, each of said plurality of servers storing at least a respective portion of the content streams available to a subscriber, said server controller causing said transport processor to receive a substantially continuous stream of content for each active subscriber regardless of the server presently storing that content.

AI
CONT

16. In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating content to said subscriber equipment via a distribution network, a provider method comprising the steps of:

establishing a session with a subscriber;

generating a playlist for said subscriber if a playlist does not presently exist, said playlist determining a sequence of content streams to be retrieved from a server and coupled to a transport processor for distribution to said subscriber via said distribution network;

in the case of said subscriber transmitting a playlist modification command, modifying said playlist in response to said playlist modification command;

in the case of said subscriber transmitting a content stream modification command, modifying said content stream in response to said content stream modification command;

closing a present content stream to be retrieved from a server and provided to a transport processor, said transport processor inserting said present content into a transport stream being provided to said subscriber via a distribution network;

determining a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber; and

communicating said next content stream to be provided to said server to a server controller, said server controller responsively causing said next content stream to be provided to said transport processor upon the termination of the present content stream provided to said transport processor.

AI
CONT

17. The method of claim 16, wherein:

said modification commands comprise at least one of an add command, a delete command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a fast forward command and a rewind command.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of:

adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said playlist in response to, respectively, said add command and said delete command.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein each content stream defined by said playlist has associated with it a fast forward stream and a fast rewind stream, said method further comprising the step of:

in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content stream

20. The method of claim 16, wherein:

in response to a remaining portion of a provided content stream being below a threshold level, communicating a termination notification to said session manager.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein:

said session manager, in response to said termination notification, communicating to said server controller a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment --
